



Human Rights Commission Meeting

Monday, August 10, 2026 at 6:00 PM

Agenda

ACCESS INFORMATION:

- A. This meeting will be held on Monday, August 10, 2026 at 6:00 PM. Location: Watertown City Hall, Lower Hearing Room.
 - B. This is an in-person meeting - any remote access is provided solely as a courtesy and may not be relied upon as alternative access. Therefore, any interruption in remote access technology shall not interrupt the meeting, and the meeting will proceed accordingly in person. In the event of such interruption, in-person attendance is available and encouraged.
 - C. The Public may join the virtual meeting online: <https://watertown-ma.zoom.us/j/83935116963>.
 - D. Public may comment through email: hrc@watertown-ma.gov.
 - E. Please Visit the Human Rights Commission Website at <https://www.watertown-ma.gov/1195/Human-Rights-Commission>.
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- 1. Call to Order
- 2. Roll Call
- 3. Acceptance of Minutes
 - A. HRC Meeting on July 13, 2026
 - B. HRC Immigrant Rights Committee Meeting on July 28, 2026
 - C. HRC Committee on Urgent Issues, Underserved Needs, and Accessibility on August 6, 2026
- 4. Public Comment
- 5. Committee Reports
 - A. Committee on Communications, Community Inroads, and Engagement
 - B. Committee on Immigrant Rights: PROTECT Act
 - C. Committee on Urgent Issues, Underserved Needs, and Accessibility: Review draft letter to the Watertown School Committee
- 6. Co-Chair Report
- 7. Staff Liaison Report
 - A. FY27 Budget Update
 - B. Complaint Process
 - C. Subcommittee Logistics

8. WPD & WPS Liaison Report
 - A. WPD: Discuss termination of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitians and Syrians, community response and support
 - B. WPS: Student Advisors to the HRC (with the Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging - Nnamdi Okaka, Student Leadership Development Coordinator)
9. Public Comment
10. Discussion
 - A. HRC Representation for the Watertown Film Festival Planning Group
 - B. Revision to the existing HRC Statement on the Supreme Court TPS Ruling and Immigrant Rights
 - C. Review a letter for Watertown elected officials to encourage action and support for our immigrant community
11. Public Comment
12. Adjournment

Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes
July 13, 2026
6:00 PM
[Webinar Recording](#)

1. Call to Order

Sarah Zoen called the meeting to order.

2. Roll Call

Present in-person were Mel Poindexter, Elizabeth Brusie, Corey Barr, Liz Aeschlimann, Gabriel Camacho and staff liaison, Jenna Bancroft. Sarah Zoen, Lisa Laplante and Xin Peng joined the meeting remotely.

Jenna Bancroft introduced herself as the new HRC staff liaison and Director of Human Services.

3. Acceptance of Minutes: June 16th HRC Meeting, June 17th Committee Meeting, July 2nd Special Session

Mel motioned to accept all minutes, Corey seconded. Motion passed seven to zero.

4. Public Comment: None; Jenna reminded attendees to raise their hand if they have a comment throughout the meeting.

5. Committee Reports

A. Committee on Communications, Community Inroads, and Engagement

Lisa created a template for identifying priorities; plan to review the template with the Committee on Urgent Issues, Underserved Needs, and Accessibility.

Statement created during the Special Session on July 2nd regarding the Supreme Court Ruling on Temporary Protected Status and Immigrant Rights. Can be viewed at www.watertown-ma.gov/statements.

6. Co-Chair Report

Sarah is working on a progress report to share with City Council and will need input from committee chairs and commissioners. Sarah will work with Jenna to finalize the draft before being brought to the commission for review.

Sarah reminded the HRC that meetings are open and any comments made are available to the public.

Mel shared that he has received feedback from community members who want the HRC to provide more immediate responses to human rights needs and violations. Xin suggested the commission discussed creating a Communications Policy. Elizabeth will take the lead and work with Jenna.

Also discussed creating an Onboarding Presentation for new HRC members. Corey will take the lead and work with Jenna.

7. Staff Liaison Report

a. Assigning Complaints to HRC Members/Committees

Jenna shared suggestions for processing incoming complaints including assignment procedure. HRC members will share areas of expertise with Jenna and assignments will be made in alphabetical order.

Lisa reiterated guidelines from the existing [Procedure for Filing Complaints with the Watertown Human Rights Commission](#).

b. HRC Website Design

The HRC Statements page will be updated so only the current statement is written out. All other statements will be available in a document library and accessible via links on the Statement page.

c. Budget Updates (FY26 & FY27)

FY27 budget starts at \$5,319 (\$681 covering FY26 reimbursements)

Discussion around FY28 budget increases should begin in October 2026; requests are due in December 2026.

8. WPD & WPS Liaison Reports

Corey thanked Captain Unsworth and the Co-Response Clinicians for responding to the incidents of Immigration Enforcement in Watertown.

9. Public Comment: None

10. Discussion

a. Identification of HRC Member to Address Recent Complaint

Discussed conflict of interest related to the Watertown Public Schools and Special Education programs. Liz Aeschlimann volunteered to meet with the family who filed a recent complaint; Jenna will join.

Lisa reminded the commission that hosting a public hearing is within the HRC's purview.

b. Recommendation of Topics for Rules of Procedure Committee

Lisa reinforced the Procedure for Filing Complaints to guide the process of accepting complaints; no current guidance on how to engage in the one-on-one meeting and information to share with complainants.

c. Immigration Enforcement Update: Statement has been added to the HRC website.

d. Farmer's Market: July 22, 2026

Discussed commissioner coverage of the HRC table at the Market and setting up resources, informational sheets, and activities.

e. Faire on the Square: September 19, 2026

Jenna will make sure a table was secured for HRC.

f. Human Rights Day: Thursday, December 10th

Sarah and Mel want to establish a Planning Committee; Lisa shared an interest in starting small with potentially an event at a school or library.

Xin suggested being part of the Unity Breakfast series of events that lead to the breakfast. Commission agreed.

11. Public Comment: None

12. Adjournment

Mel motioned to adjourn the meeting; motion passed.

Human Rights Commission
Immigrant Rights Committee
Meeting Minutes
July 28, 2026
4:30 PM

1. Call to Order

Corey Barr called the meeting to order.

2. Roll Call

Present were Corey Barr, Xin Peng, Elizabeth Brusie, and Gabriel Camacho (intermittently experienced technical issues).

3. Discussion

A. Follow-Up on Recent Local Immigration Enforcement Activity

Corey shared there were four incidents in Watertown of residents being detained prior to the last HRC meeting. The Rapid Response Network (RRN) is offering support and trying to balance protecting family privacy while also educating and spreading information to the public.

Xin questioned what elected officials can do to support the residents who were detained.

B. Massachusetts Temporary Protected Status (TPS) Committee Event

Discussed response from HRC:

Update most recent statement to include additional resources from the State and local non-profit agencies; to be presented at the next HRC meeting for approval.

Xin will draft a statement for City and State officials to review and bring the draft to the next HRC meeting for approval.

Xin expressed need to ensure Watertown Free Public Library (WFPL) has Know Your Rights (KYR) resources in Creole and Arabic to support Haitian and Syrian immigrants.

Corey will reach out to Captain Unsworth at WPD to ask him to be prepared to discuss resources for residents at the next HRC meeting.

4. Public Comment

Jacky van Leeuwen, Project Literacy, shared WFPL has KYR cards and family preparedness packets available to residents. Jacky asked if any Watertown Police officers speak Haitian-Creole.

5. Adjournment

Xin motioned to adjourn; Elizabeth second.

Human Rights Commission
Committee on Urgent Issues, Underserved Needs, and Accessibility
Meeting Minutes
August 6, 2026
1:00 PM

1. Call to Order

Gabriel Camacho called the meeting to order at 1:02 PM.

2. Roll Call

Present were Gabriel Camacho, Xin Peng, Elizabeth Brusie, Liz Aeschlimann, and HRC staff liaison, Jenna Bancroft.

3. Discussion: HRC Assessment Goals 3 & 5

Prioritization and Action Steps for Key Areas of Need

Goal 3

Spanish Speaking Immigrants

Discussed ideas for outreach and to learn more about the experiences of immigrant communities.

- Be present at cultural events and festivals (Elizabeth)
- Help community members start groups like the Chinese American Association of Watertown (Xin)
- Encourage civic engagement and make it accessible for all residents (Gabe)
- Utilizing existing City resources to make materials and information accessible (Liz)
- Collaborate with the library or another entity to bring back a city-wide cultural event (Xin)

Affordable, Accessible Housing

Elizabeth will continue to be a point of contact for the HRC with affordable housing information. Xin reminded the committee the City is hosting another Watertown Square meeting on 8/11.

SPED and Incidents in Public Schools

Complainants hope the HRC can support the School Committee's approval to host a Public Hearing (meeting on 8/17 to decide); write a letter or HRC members attend the meeting to support in person (Liz). Advise school committee to encourage School Committee to share with the community that families can file a Complaint with the HRC (Xin). Liz can draft the letter and bring it to the Commission for edits and to vote (Liz).

Disability Voice and Access

Jenna will connect with the Watertown Commission on Disability (COD) to ask for a presentation to the HRC and/or for a HRC member to attend an upcoming COD meeting.

Goal 5

- Seek additional ways to share feedback with the community (i.e., open form).
- Liz suggested the HRC remind all attendees at every meeting to email hrc@watertown-ma.gov to connect with the HRC and inform the public on the process of filing a complaint.
- Elizabeth suggested a physical complaint or feedback box at the Library. Committee agreed that could happen during Human Rights Month. Xin confirmed World in Watertown is interested in partnering for Human Rights Day in December as a lead-in to the Unity Breakfast.

4. Public Comment: None

5. Adjournment

Gabriel motioned to end the meeting and Elizabeth seconded. Meeting adjourned at 2:06 PM.

**Proposal to Update Resources on the HRC Statement on the Supreme Court
Temporary Protected Status (TPS) Ruling and Immigrant Rights
July 6, 2026**

Visit www.watertown-ma.gov/statements to view the HRC's full statement.

CURRENT RESOURCE LIST:

For resources, to contact the Commission, or to file a concern or complaint, please visit:

- [Watertown Human Rights Commission](#)
- [Human Rights Commission Complaints page](#)

Additional resources are available through:

- [Watertown Police Department welcome brochure \(PDF\)](#)
- [Massachusetts Attorney General's Office Guidance on ICE \(PDF\)](#)
- [Massachusetts Immigrant & Refugee Advocacy Coalition \(MIRA\)](#)
- [Massachusetts Access to Counsel Initiative \(MACI\)](#)
- [LUCIE Immigrant Justice Network of Massachusetts](#)
- [National Immigration Law Center \(NILC\)](#)
- [National Immigrant Justice Center \(NIJC\)](#)
- [ACLU Immigrants' Rights](#)
- [ACLU of Massachusetts](#)

PROPOSED UPDATES TO RESOURCES:

- MIRA, [End of TPS for Haiti and Syria: What now?](#)
- Office of Governor Maura Healey, [Resources for Families Affected by Recent Changes to Temporary Protected Status \(TPS\)](#)
- Office of the Attorney General, [Legal Resources for Haitian and Syrian TPS Holders](#)

Draft Letter from the Watertown Human Rights Commission

Dear [Councilor/Representative/Senator] [Last Name]:

The Watertown Human Rights Commission writes to express our concern about the recent increase in immigration enforcement activities affecting residents of Watertown and neighboring communities. Reports of increased ICE operations, together with recent changes to federal immigration policies affecting humanitarian immigration programs, have created fear and uncertainty for many members of our community.

The Human Rights Commission was established to promote equal opportunity, dignity, and respect for the human rights of all who live, work, and learn in Watertown. Consistent with that mission, we believe it is important to speak when members of our community experience fear, discrimination, or barriers to participating fully in civic life.

Many of those affected are longtime members of our community who have been pursuing legal immigration pathways or are otherwise lawfully present in the United States. They are our neighbors, coworkers, students, parents, business owners, and friends who contribute every day to Watertown's economic, civic, and cultural life. Regardless of immigration status, every person deserves dignity, due process, and fair treatment under the law.

Community organizations have shared that some families are afraid to send their children to school, seek medical care, report crimes, attend places of worship, or participate in community life because of concerns about immigration enforcement. This climate of fear affects not only immigrant families but the health, safety, and well-being of our entire community.

While immigration enforcement is primarily a federal responsibility, local leadership plays an important role in building trust, sharing reliable information, and supporting residents during times of uncertainty. We hope you will consider:

- **Using your public platform** to reaffirm Watertown's commitment to dignity, inclusion, due process, and equal treatment for all members of our community.
- **Supporting community response efforts** by promoting or participating in fundraising campaigns for trusted nonprofit organizations that provide legal representation, emergency assistance, food, housing support, and other essential services for families affected by immigration enforcement.
- **Sharing trusted resources** by directing residents to Know Your Rights materials, legal service providers, and community organizations that support immigrant families.
- **Engaging directly with the community** by attending community forums, listening sessions, cultural events, and resource fairs, and by meeting with residents and organizations serving those affected.

- **Working with municipal and state partners** to identify additional resources that strengthen language access, family support, legal services, and access to essential public services.

We recognize that local officials cannot determine federal immigration policy. However, your leadership can help reduce fear, strengthen trust in local government, encourage civic participation, and reaffirm that everyone who calls Watertown home is a valued member of our community.

The Human Rights Commission welcomes the opportunity to work with you in support of our immigrant community and to identify ways we can strengthen Watertown's longstanding commitment to human rights, inclusion, and equal opportunity.

Thank you for your continued service to our community. At moments like this, visible leadership matters. We hope you will join us in reaffirming that Watertown remains a welcoming community where every person is treated with dignity, fairness, and respect.

Sincerely,

The Watertown Human Rights Commission

Appendix A – Suggested Actions for Elected Officials

Supporting Watertown's Immigrant Community: Examples of Local Leadership

The following examples are offered as actions elected officials may consider in support of Watertown residents affected by immigration enforcement.

Communicate

- Issue a public statement reaffirming Watertown's commitment to inclusion, dignity, and due process.
- Share trusted legal resources and Know Your Rights information through newsletters, websites, and social media.
- Help counter misinformation by directing residents to reliable sources of information.

Support Community Organizations

- Promote fundraising campaigns for nonprofit organizations providing legal representation, emergency financial assistance, food, housing support, and family services.
- Attend or help publicize fundraising events benefiting immigrant-serving organizations.
- Encourage businesses, civic groups, and residents to volunteer or contribute to trusted community organizations.

Be Present

- Attend community forums, listening sessions, cultural celebrations, and Know Your Rights workshops.
- Meet regularly with immigrant-serving organizations, educators, faith leaders, and affected residents to better understand community needs.
- Visit organizations providing direct services to immigrant families.

Strengthen Local Partnerships

- Encourage collaboration among City departments, schools, libraries, healthcare providers, faith communities, and nonprofit organizations.
- Support multilingual outreach and language-access efforts so residents can safely access municipal services.
- Help identify resources for families experiencing hardship because of immigration enforcement.

Advocate Within Your Role

- **Support funding for legal assistance, language access, and emergency family support programs.**
- **Encourage policies that protect due process, preserve family unity, and ensure residents can safely access schools, healthcare, public safety, and other essential services.**

Why Local Leadership Matters

When families are afraid to send children to school, seek medical care, report crimes, or participate in community life, the consequences extend beyond those directly affected. Public safety, public health, education, neighborhood trust, and civic participation all suffer.

Local elected officials cannot determine federal immigration policy, but they can help ensure that Watertown remains a community where every resident is treated with dignity and where families know they are supported during times of uncertainty.